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IS RACISM DEAD?

PAGES 6-7

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Senate turnaround

Burris 'very happy' after meeting with leaders, expects to be seated

Chicago Tribune

WASHINGTON The U.S. Senate's Democratic majority opened the way Wednesday for Roland Burris to become Illinois' next senator, pressured by President-elect Obama to remove a politically consuming distraction less than two weeks before he assumes the White House during an economic crisis.

» FOR MORE ON THE BLAGOJEVICH IMPEACHMENT COMMITTEE HEARINGS *page 8*

A top Senate Democratic source said Obama's concerns about the Burris situation were among several factors that resulted in an about-face by Senate leaders, who had vowed to reject Burris or anyone else named by disgraced Gov. Blagojevich.

Obama told Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and others when he visited Capitol Hill this week "that if Burris had legal standing—and it appears he has—he should be seated as quickly as possible," a top Obama source said Wednesday. Obama earlier had sided with Reid's opposition to the appointment.

Reid held a 45-minute Capitol Hill meeting Wednesday with Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin and Burris. Afterward, Reid called the Blagojevich appointee someone who was "candid and forthright" and "not trying to avoid any responsibility or trying to hide anything" about how the governor named him to the seat.

"I'm happy," Burris said after the meeting.

Roland Burris (left) meets Wednesday with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) at the Capitol in Washington. The U.S. Senate may consider the appointment of Burris, former attorney general of Illinois, to the Senate seat vacated by Barack Obama. BLOOMBERG NEWS

Reid and Durbin outlined a path for Burris to take office that puts much of the pressure back on state lawmakers and Supreme Court justices in Illinois. They said Burris needs a ruling by the Illinois Supreme Court forcing Secretary of State Jesse White to certify Blagojevich's appointment. They also said they awaited Burris' answers to questions Thursday about the appointment when he appears before an Illinois House panel that is considering impeaching Blagojevich.

Reid said that if the two Illinois issues are resolved—with the paperwork signed and Burris addressing Illinois lawmakers' questions—the appointment may be referred to the Senate Rules Committee. "There's going to come a time when the entire Senate is going to have to act on this, and that day I hope would come sooner rather than later," Reid said.

Durbin said he expected the process to seat Burris could be resolved in a matter of weeks.

"The point is, now we're trying to be fair to Roland Burris," Durbin said.

Obama hails 'extraordinary gathering'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON President-elect Obama hailed a rare Oval Office gathering of all U.S. presidents as an extraordinary event on Wednesday as the current occupant, President Bush, reminded his predecessors and successor that the office "transcends the individual."

"I just want to thank the president for hosting us," the president-elect said, flanked by former President George H.W. Bush on one side and his son on the other.

Presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter, both smiling broadly, stood with them.

"All the gentlemen here understand both the pressures and possibilities of this office," Obama said. "For me to have the opportunity to get advice, good counsel and fellowship with these individuals is extraordinary."

IT'S BEEN A WHILE

All the presidents were last at the White House in 1981: Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan, who was president then. The three former presidents were there before leaving as part of the U.S. delegation to the funeral of Egypt's Anwar Sadat, who had been assassinated.

In a swift photo opportunity, the current president wished Obama well before all five men headed to a private lunch that lasted about 90 minutes.

"I want to thank the president-elect for joining the ex-presidents for lunch," Bush said, even though he's not quite a member of that club yet.

"One message that I have and I think we all share is that we want you to succeed. Whether we're Democrat or Republican we care deeply about this country," Bush said. "All of us who have served in this office understand that the office itself transcends the individual."

He added: "We wish you all the very best, and so does the country."

Bush and Obama also met privately for roughly 30 minutes. That one-on-one meeting, coming just 13 days before Obama's inauguration, likely focused on grim current events, with war in the Gaza Strip and the economy in a recession.

3 FOR ALL

Odd numbers

There are even numbers and odd numbers ... and then there are really odd numbers like these. AP

$800

Not since Kramer in the calzone episode on "Seinfeld" has someone been caught with so much change. Police say a robber broke a window at a Salt Lake City home and made off with a paint bucket full of $800 in change. Officers soon stopped a 48-year-old man holding a bucket of coins and carrying a crowbar in his pants. He was charged Tuesday with several misdemeanors.

63

Thanks to Lou the brave mule, Jolene Solomon, 63, of McMinnville, Tenn., will live to see 64. Solomon says Lou saved her life by alerting her to a blaze in her attic, allowing her to get out of the house before it burned down. Solomon had just finished supper on New Year's Day when Lou's acting up got her attention. Solomon, who lives alone, stepped outside and saw the fire.

$20,000

An Omaha man has filed a lawsuit accusing his ex-wife and former father-in-law of hiding a recording device inside his daughter's teddy bear in order to spy on him. William Duane Lewton, his daughter—who is now 5—and five other plaintiffs who were recorded by the bear are seeking $20,000 each, plus other damages and court costs, from each defendant.

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Chicago Tribune

page four

MARK BAZER
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The Dark Side is strong in this one

In hindsight, the plastic swords we bought my 3-year-old son probably were a bad idea.

Of course, he was thrilled to get them. "For me, Daddy?" he exclaimed. "To hurt you with?"

OK, he didn't say that last part, but, believe me, it was in his eyes. If you'd told me when my son was born that sooner or later he'd turn to a life of violence, I wouldn't have been surprised. Boys will be boys and all that. But never would I have expected it to start so soon.

Just yesterday he was watching "Dora the Explorer." Today, he wants to maim her. (In this case he receives my encouragement.)

If you'd told me when my son was born that sooner or later he'd turn to a life of violence, I wouldn't have been surprised. Boys will be boys and all that. But never would I have expected it to start so soon.

My guilt over exposing my son's dark side here requires me to let you also know that, when he's not drawing blood, he's a sweet kid. Whenever, for example, he locks pretend "bad guys" in jail, he tells them, "Stay there and play with your own toys." The real American prison system, along with being shamefully overcrowded, doesn't allow toys. And he's funny too. Our neighbor was over a few weeks ago, and my wife pointed at my son and ruefully explained, "He's into swords." To which my son looked up from stabbing a doll and noted, "And guns." Right, son, and guns.

How does he even know about guns? I long wondered. We live in the People's Republic of Oak Park, where anything that even rhymes with "gun" is illegal (hence the ban on puns, which is why the town's newspaper doesn't have headlines).

Turns out he gets his gun knowledge from older boys at his preschool. (First rule of parenting: Always blame other kids and, by extension, their parents.) Soon, I know, he'll pass his knowledge of modern weaponry on to younger boys. It's kind of beautiful, if you think about it.

Now, I'm not too concerned about any of this. You can try to take the enlightened road and hold out on toy weapons—and we did—but they'll find ways to get their stabbing in.

But I do know that at some undetermined point, he'll reach a fork in the road: on one path a normal life of peaceful living, his darker urges held in check via a steady diet of cop shows, gangsta rap and New Yorker magazine stories about Hezbollah. On the other path: actual violence and Atlantic Monthly stories about Hezbollah.

I don't claim to know how to keep a child off the latter path, but banning plastic weapons doesn't seem like a guarantee of anything, except the kid *really* wanting to kill you.

Still, I'd do anything to pry loose the sword now constantly in my son's hand. Going to bed every night with bloody knuckles is beginning to get old. **MARK BAZER IS A REDEYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR.**

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Debate over Obama's true colors

Associated Press

A perplexing new chapter is unfolding in Barack Obama's racial saga: Many people insist that "the first black president" is actually not black.

Debate over whether to call this son of a white Kansan and a black Kenyan biracial, African-American, mixed-race, half-and-half, multiracial—or, in Obama's own words, a "mutt"—has reached a crescendo since Obama's election shattered assumptions about race.

Obama has said, "I identify as African-American—that's how I'm treated and that's how I'm viewed. I'm proud of it."

"Of course Obama is black. And he's not black too," said Rebecca Walker, a 38-year-old writer who is of Russian, African, Irish, Scottish and Native American descent. "He's white, and he's not white too."

The entire issue balances precariously on the "one-drop" rule, which sprang from the slaveowner habit of dropping by the slave quarters and producing brown babies. One drop of black blood meant that person, and his or her descendants, could never be a full citizen.

Some white people seem insulted by a perception that Obama is rejecting his white mother or baffled by the notion that someone would choose to be black instead of half-white.

"He can't be African-American. With race, white claims 50 percent of him and black 50 percent of him," Ron Wilson of Plantation, Fla., wrote in a letter to the Sun-Sentinel newspaper.

U.S. Rep. G. K. Butterfield, a 61-year-old black man who by all appearances is white, grew up in a prominent black family in Wilson, N.C. Both of his parents had white forebears, "and those genes came together to produce me." He grew up on the black side of town, led civil rights marches as a young man, and to this day goes out of his way to inform people that he is certainly not white.

Butterfield has made his choice; he says let Obama do the same.

"You are a product of your experience," Butterfield said.

END OF RACISM?

Obama's victory has many optimistic, but that doesn't mean the fight's over

Todd Walton of Broadview, a blogger known as The Hip Hop Democrat, believes the U.S. has made great strides toward ending racism. PATRICK SABLAN FOR REDEYE

By Kyra Kyles
REDEYE

When President-elect Obama is sworn into office Jan. 20, he not only will make history as the first black man to hold the highest office in the country.

He will serve as living proof that racism is dying, a number of locals told RedEye.

"I'm very optimistic," said Todd Walton, 25, of Broadview. Walton, a blogger known as The Hip Hop Democrat, has written about the prelude to and aftermath of the '08 election. "This is a huge development and one that some people didn't think was even possible."

Walton, who is black, said he has been particularly moved by how Americans have come together in the days since Obama won the White House.

"I find myself having conversations with people of so many different races, and this hasn't really happened before, and it's mostly about the election," Walton said. "It's just a different feeling in the air."

But does that "different feeling" mean that the end of racism is in sight?

Not yet, according to a random sampling of diverse locals who talked to RedEye about the state of race in America. Many, however, echoed the upbeat U.S. sentiment on racism captured in recent polls. Approximately two-thirds of Americans polled believe black-and-white strife "will eventually be worked out," according to a USA Today/Gallup Poll conducted the day after the presidential election, in the highest percentage recorded since Gallup first asked the question in 1963, amid the civil rights struggle.

For one Lincoln Parker, the election is proof that American culture has dramatically shifted.

"When you look around and see different people of different backgrounds in corporate America, you can see that racial progress is being made," said Nicole Hollowell, 25. "I don't know if we can honestly say that people didn't consider race while they were voting, but we all know this couldn't have happened 100 years ago. There's a change and it's encouraging."

But Hollowell, who is white, said Americans still have a long way to get rid

Race debate

txtable

What do you think? Has President-elect Obama helped bring an end to racism in America? Text **"race"** and the number of your answer to **47383**. You'll get the poll results instantly.

1. Yes, the end of racism is in sight. **2.** Not yet—we still have a long way to go.

of racism completely.

Local cultural experts agree, cautioning that positive feelings might actually derail anti-racism initiatives. Americans can't get complacent because of Obama's achievement, they warned.

"Racism is systemic, and part of our institutions," said Vickie Sides, associate director of a racial justice initiative at the YWCA Metropolitan Chicago. "Individuals of color have access to opportunities that were not possible 30 years ago, but the structures and institutions still need changing. How individuals treat each other, in terms of racial understanding, is just a small part of the puzzle."

Vince Mayes, who lives in East Rogers Park, said signs of blatant racism are more difficult to find than ever in Chicago. But that doesn't mean locals are color-blind, Mayes said, citing the city's historic segregation. Blacks in Chicago are the most isolated racial group in 20 of the nation's largest cities, according to a recent Tribune story that analyzed 2008 population estimates. In order to integrate Chicago, approximately 84 percent of the black or white population would need to change neighborhoods, the Tribune's data revealed.

Mayes, who is black, said he personally feels the burden of segregation, particularly when hanging out downtown or even where he lives, on the city's North Side.

"I'll go to a nice restaurant and have white customers or wait staff greet me as 'homie' or 'blood' or, worse, act like they're scared of me," Mayes, 46, said. "And they'll really do a double take when I'm with my girlfriend because she is white."

Mayes, who said he grew up during the civil rights era and attended marches with his mother, is not confident racial attitudes are much different among younger generations.

"All you have to do is go on the Web," Mayes said. "You see postings calling people 'n-words' and you hear about kids dragging nooses behind their cars. Those are young people doing that."

But Uptown resident Karl Kimpo said younger Americans are more willing to face and fight racism when they see it. He has seen dramatic changes over the last decade, Kimpo, 33, said.

"When an African-American breaks through an obstacle, even if it's on TV or movies, it trickles down to Latinos, to Asians," Kimpo, who is Filipino, said, citing Obama's election and Halle Berry's 2002 Oscar win as recent examples. "It shows that success is not limited to the mainstream and it's very inspiring to see."

And that will continue as younger generations increasingly interact with other races on a social level, some said.

"We grew up feeling interracial dating is no big deal," Hollowell said. "And I have friends of all different backgrounds. It doesn't matter."

Jamie Argento, a former Chicagoan who lives in New York, agreed, but pointed out that such open attitudes might not mirror those in other cities.

"Chicago, in particular, is a big, liberal city," said 25-year-old Argento, who is white. "I don't know if that's the case if you were to go somewhere like Idaho."

That could change with a black man at the helm of the country, according to Sides, who said it will expose Americans to new realities about race. Still, Sides cautioned, we can't be too quick to declare mission accomplished.

"We want to capitalize on those feelings of hope because they inspire people to act and become part of grass-roots change," Sides said. "But we have to remind people that Obama's election is part of the beginning of a conversation on race, not the end."

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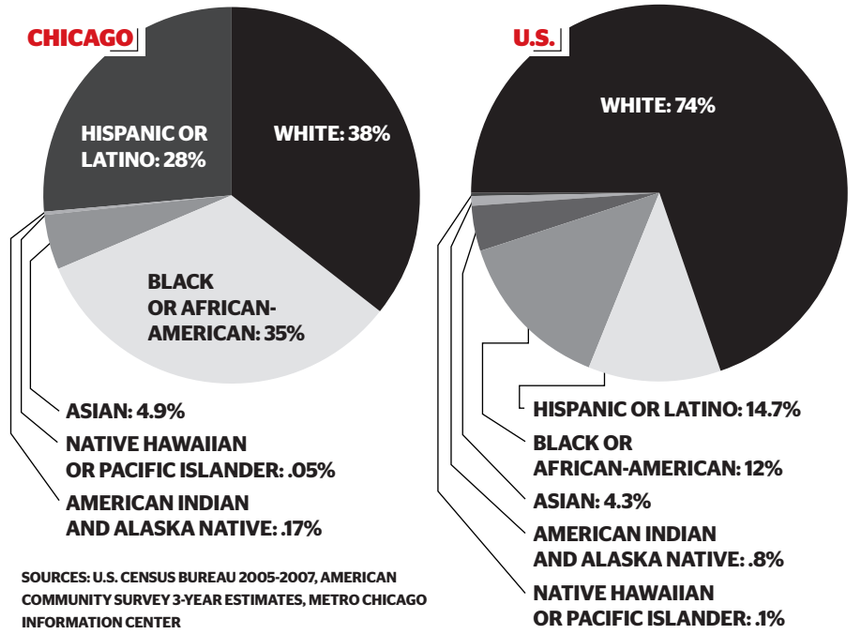
BY THE NUMBERS

Check out the local makeup of racial groups—including Hispanic, American Indian and Asian—as compared with the U.S. as a whole, according to the most recent U.S. census data and estimates. **Note:** Percentages don't add up to 100 due to rounding, and Hispanics may be counted in more than one category.



SOURCES: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU 2005-2007, AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 3-YEAR ESTIMATES, METRO CHICAGO INFORMATION CENTER

Race issue has many colors

Jin Kim is using comedy to bring the conversation on Asians to the forefront. BRIAN J. MOROWCZYNSKI FOR REDEYE

Has race in America been boiled down to just a black-and-white issue?

Yes, if you ask some members of Chicago's Asian-American community who said they feel that Asians are a footnote in national race discussions.

Unlike the local Latino community (about 28 percent of the population, according to recent census figures) Asians are a minority among minorities, some local Asians told RedEye.

"We are part of a minority that is under 5 percent, so we definitely don't get as much attention or consideration when it comes to race relations," 28-year-old Jin Kim said. "It's not like the election has opened the floodgates for us either. The number of Asian-Americans you see in pop culture is very small, and the number of role models is even smaller."

Kim, for one, is using comedy to bring the conversation on Asians to the forefront—with the help of other members of his sketch comedy group. Stir Friday Nights, which consists of 12 Asian American players, tackles controversy from the over-eroticizing of Asian women to a recent T-shirt flap involving Cubs player Kosuke Fukudome, who joined the team after moving here from Japan.

Harrison Pak, 34, said he and other troupe members were surprised this summer after seeing the Cubs shirt featuring Fukudome's name and a slanty-eyed cartoon bear declaring "Horry Cow," a stereotypical Japanese mispronunciation of Harry Caray's famous "holy cow."

Pak and crew's response: a comedy show called "Horry Cow, That's Lacist," which included homemade tongue-in-cheek T-shirts mocking other racial stereotypes.

Crowds loved the spoof shirts, perhaps too much, said troupe member Melissa Canciller. "We had people try to buy the shirts off of us afterward," Canciller, 32, told RedEye. "I don't know if they quite got it." KYRA KYLES

chicago

Impeachment committee reviews hiring

Associated Press

Illinois House members investigating Gov. Blagojevich's impeachment heard Wednesday about illegal hiring in the administration as they prepared for a highly anticipated appearance by the governor's U.S. Senate pick.

Committee member Rep. Lou Lang (D-Skokie) summarized an internal 2004 investigation by the executive inspector general that found "a concerted effort to subvert" state hiring laws at the Department of Employment Security.

The review detailed a scheme by Blagojevich's patronage office in which unqualified people were hired, candidates were told to lie on applications, were put in positions that didn't exist, or were put on the payroll over qualified military veterans, whom state law says get preference for jobs.

Committee members seemed impatient hearing yet another transgression by the second-term Democrat after days of testimony about wrongdoing or incompetence. Blagojevich was arrested Dec. 9 on political corruption charges, including attempting to sell Barack Obama's vacant U.S. Senate seat.

"We're beating a dead horse here," said Rep. Suzanne "Suzie" Bassi, a Palatine Republican. "Let's get going on this."

That's what the committee plans to do. Several members said they hope to complete their work and see a House vote on a committee recommendation for impeachment before the week's out. An impeachment recommendation would go to the state Senate for a trial.

But first, the panel will wait for a federal court ruling Thursday on whether it will get to hear some of the secretly recorded conversations U.S. Atty. Patrick Fitzgerald made of Blagojevich allegedly scheming to trade government action for campaign contributions.

And the committee plans to hear Thursday from former state Atty. Gen. Roland Burris, whom Blagojevich, thumbing his nose at the Legislature, appointed to the Senate seat after his arrest.

Republicans, who requested Burris' attendance, said they wanted to know the circumstances behind his appointment and why Blagojevich's criminal defense attorney made the overture to the Democrat.

Family and friends console one another Wednesday after three children were killed in an apartment fire on the Southeast Side. The children were found on the third floor, where the flames broke out, said fire department spokeswoman Eve Rodriguez. Firefighters rescued a fourth sibling amid light smoke on the second floor. ZBIGNIEW BZDAK/TRIBUNE

FIRE KILLS 3 KIDS

Chicago Tribune

Chicago police on Wednesday were conducting a "preliminary criminal investigation" into a Southeast Side apartment fire that killed three young children and injured a fourth, police spokeswoman Monique Bond said.

But she said no cause had been established for the blaze that began about 10:40 a.m. in the top floor of a three-story building in the 8300 block of South Buffalo Avenue. A Chicago Fire Department spokeswoman said the flames also spread to the roof of the 2½-story building next door.

The dead children were identified as siblings, Sharell Gates, 3, Tyrell Gates, 2, and Jimmy Gates, 7 months old, according to the Cook County medical examiner's office.

Firefighters rescued a fourth sibling, 4-year-old Jamari, amid light smoke on the second floor of the burning building.

Firefighters found no working smoke detectors in the residence, officials said.

The children's mother was being questioned by police.

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services was investigating an allegation of neglect in the children's deaths, said DCFS spokesman Jimmie Whitelow. The agency has had no prior contact with the children's family, he said, and a fifth child was placed in the care of relatives.

The children had lived in the home with their mother for about 2 years, along with a 5-year-old sister who was at school at the time the fire broke out, two relatives said.

Natalie Gordon, a cousin of the children's mother, said the mother told her she was across the street visiting an ill relative when she saw her house on fire.

"She's a good mom. She's too young, but she took care of them. She was responsible. It can happen to anybody. A couple seconds can take away three lives," Gordon said.

Bank robber sought

The FBI is seeking the public's help in finding a man who robbed a West Loop bank Tuesday and may have robbed another bank last month on the Southwest Side. The man walked into the Bank of America branch at 105 N. Halsted St. and handed the teller a note that announced the robbery, the FBI said. Anyone with information should call the FBI at 312-421-6700.

Carbon monoxide sickens 8

Emergency personnel called Wednesday to help a possible stroke victim at a South Side home instead found eight people suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning, officials said. Fire Department crews called to a home in the 1500 block of East 85th Street about 3:30 a.m. measured carbon monoxide levels at 850 parts per million, said department spokeswoman Eve Rodriguez.

Bail set in O'Hare gun incident

An Indiana man arrested for trying to bring a gun through security at O'Hare was ordered held Wednesday on $75,000 bail. Goce Stojanovski, 47, was stopped by Transportation Security Administration screeners Tuesday when he tried to go through a screening checkpoint with a handgun and ammunition in the pocket of his carry-on bag, authorities said.

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1 Watch this
Yes, that's a phone in a watch. LG Electronics Chief Technology Officer Woo Hyun Paik shows it off Wednesday at the International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. AP

2 Airline threat?
An L.A. airport spokesman said a man who allegedly made a threat Wednesday aboard a Delta jetliner as it was landing was subdued by passengers and was held for questioning. The nature of the threat was not disclosed, but the FBI is investigating.

3 Mail problem
A U.S. Postal Service worker in Marysville, Calif., on Wednesday was charged with opening greeting cards to steal cash and other property.

Teen births
Mississippi now has the nation's highest teen birth rate, displacing Texas and New Mexico for that lamentable title, a new federal report says. Mississippi's rate was more than 60 percent higher than the national average in 2006, according to new state statistics.

4 Tough to swallow
Mexico has a gum problem—it's all over the sidewalks. Now the country is responding with innovations ranging from expensive sidewalk steam-cleaners to natural chewing gum that breaks down quickly. It's even telling its citizens to swallow their gum.

5 School gunman
Police say a masked gunman shot to death the principal and a teacher at a school in Budapest. The unidentified gunman also shot a security guard on the hand in Wednesday evening's attack.

6 Polygamy arrests
Two top leaders of a polygamous community in western Canada have been arrested and charged with practicing polygamy, British Columbia's attorney general said Wednesday in Vancouver.

Official: Madoff violated order

7 NEW YORK Disgraced financier Bernard Madoff and his wife sent at least 16 watches, a jade necklace and a diamond bracelet to family and relatives, proving he will continue to dissipate what little is left from his $50 billion fraud, a prosecutor told a judge in arguing that Madoff be jailed.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Marc Litt said in a letter released Wednesday that Madoff violated a court order barring him from dissipating, concealing or disposing of any assets when he and his wife sent the items to close relatives and two friends.

A criminal complaint against Madoff said the former Nasdaq chairman had offered to distribute between $200 million and $300 million that remained in his company's accounts to close relatives and friends before he surrendered to authorities.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT
Madoff was arrested Dec. 11 on a securities fraud charge after the FBI said he confessed to swindling investors. Authorities say he told his sons he ran a $50 billion Ponzi scheme and had only a few hundred million dollars left. Although he has been freed on $10 million bail, he has been confined to his $7 million Manhattan penthouse with an electronic bracelet and 24-hour guard.

In his six-page letter sent to Ellis on Tuesday night and publicly filed Wednesday, Litt said Madoff violated his promise not to touch his assets when he and his wife sent multiple packages on Dec. 24 to relatives and friends.

The prosecutor said one package contained 13 watches, one diamond necklace, an emerald ring, and two sets of cufflinks, items estimated to be worth more than $1 million.

He said two other packages contained a diamond bracelet, a gold watch, a diamond Cartier watch, a diamond Tiffany watch, four diamond brooches, a jade necklace and other assorted jewelry and were sent to relatives.

8 A man skis Wednesday in the Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde basilica area in Marseille, France. Subfreezing temperatures and snowfall caused problems across Europe on Wednesday, closing Milan's two airports, halting trains in the normally sunny south of France and pressing into service ice breakers in the Dutch port of Rotterdam. AP

Joe the war correspondent

9 TOLEDO, Ohio Joe The Plumber is putting down his wrenches and picking up a reporter's notebook.

The Ohio man who became a household name during the presidential campaign says he is heading to Israel as a war correspondent for the conservative Web site **pjtv.com**.

Samuel Wurzelbacher says he'll spend 10 days covering the fighting. He tells WNWO-TV in Toledo that he wants to let Israel's "Average Joes share their story."

Wurzelbacher gained attention during the final weeks of the campaign when he asked Barack Obama about his tax plan. He later joined Republican John McCain on the campaign trail.

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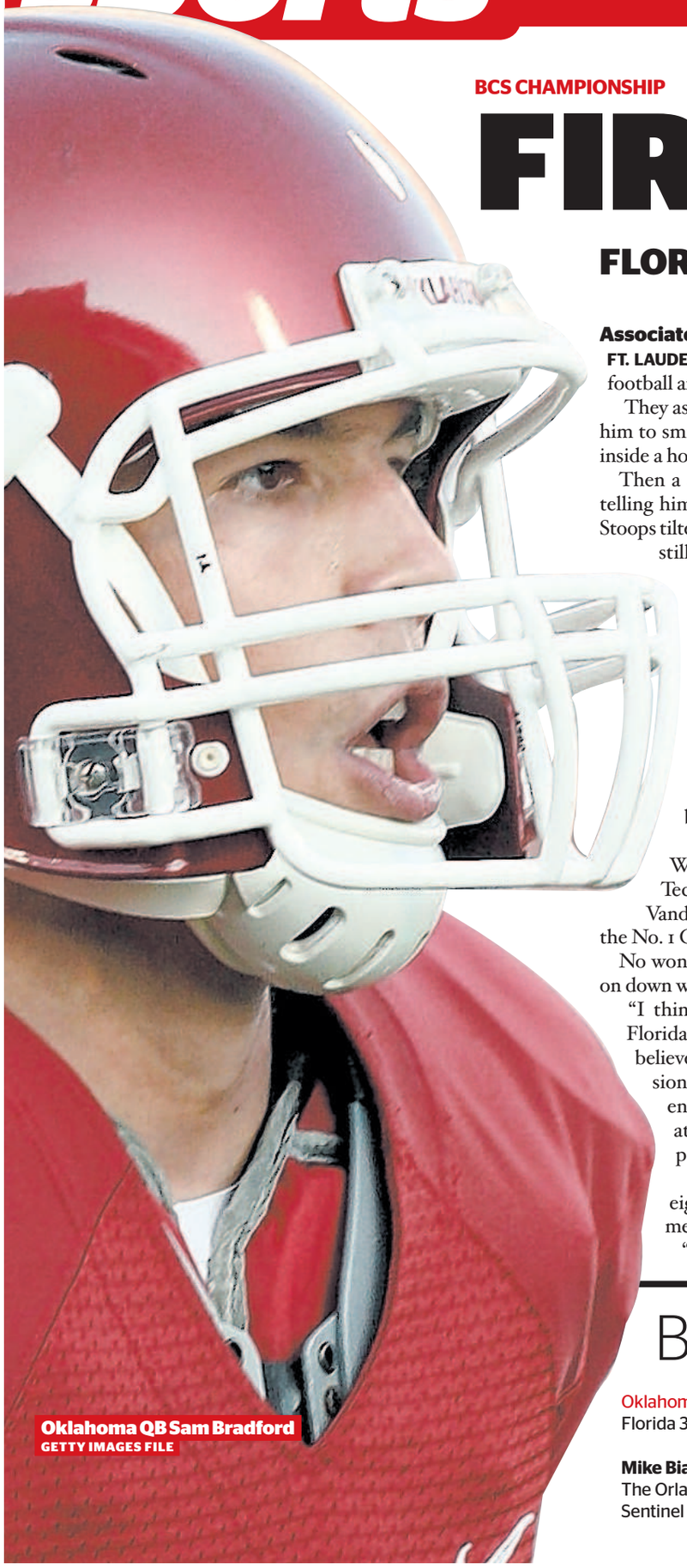

Oklahoma QB Sam Bradford
GETTY IMAGES FILE

BCS CHAMPIONSHIP

FIRST PRIORITY

FLORIDA, OKLAHOMA, OTHERS STAKING CLAIM TO NO. 1

Associated Press

FT. LAUDERDALE Bob Stoops posed next to the crystal football and played along with a wave of photographers.

They asked him to look to the left, he did. They asked him to smile, he did. Any shot they wanted Wednesday inside a hotel ballroom, he gave them.

Then a shutterbug shouted to the Oklahoma coach, telling him to hold up his finger, showing who's No. 1. Stoops tilted his head, stared at the guy and kept his hands still. "Too soon," he said.

First, there's a game to play. The hurry-up Sooners and speedy Florida meet Thursday night for the BCS championship, a matchup that includes a pair of Heisman Trophy winners, an SEC vs. Big 12 debate and more than its share of trash talk.

Besides, enough teams already are claiming the top spot. Southern California, Utah and Texas hope their bowl wins impressed enough voters in The Associated Press poll, which will be released in the wee hours Friday.

Heck, how about New Hampshire? The Wildcats beat Army, which beat Louisiana Tech, which beat Mississippi State, which beat Vanderbilt, which beat Mississippi, which handed the No. 1 Gators their only loss.

No wonder college fans from President-elect Obama on down want to see a playoff system.

"I think at some point in time it might happen," Florida coach Urban Meyer said Wednesday. "I didn't believe that a few years ago, but I feel now the discussion is out of control. I can't imagine any guy that enjoys football not discussing that wherever he's at. So I imagine at some point that might happen now."

As to whether it should be a tourney for four, eight or 16 teams, that's someone else's department.

"It's not my job to figure that out," Meyer said. "I think it would be hard. I don't know how you do it."

Echoed Stoops: "That's not for me to do. They're all good football teams; everyone realizes that. So again, that's for you guys to choose."

Meanwhile, there's a pretty attractive game brewing at Dolphin Stadium between 12-1 teams.

The winner gets the glistening crystal prize. That could come in handy for the Gators—they won the trophy two years ago, but a recruit accidentally bumped into it in April, shattering the $30,000 football. Fortunately for them, it was insured.

While Florida boasts great speed, the No. 2 Sooners operate at a blink-of-the-eye pace. They set a modern record for points this season, averaging 54 a game.

With linemen, receivers and backs rushing downfield, their no-huddle offense often leaves opponents gasping and disorganized. Teams are allowed 40 seconds to run a play; Oklahoma tries to snap the ball in half that time.

Given more than a month to prepare, Meyer said it's still hard to simulate what the Sooners do. "You don't understand you have substitution limitations because of tempo, you have the fatigue factor and you have the chaos factor where you like to line up," he said.

ON TV
7:15 p.m. Fox

TRASH-TALKERS

In Gator country, both teams got in early shots this week.

Sooners cornerback Dominique Franks went first, saying Tim Tebow would be nothing more than the fourth-best quarterback in the Big 12. The next day, Florida linebacker Brandon Spikes called Big 12 defenses "a joke."

Usually, teams try to avoid giving their opponents something to tack up on the bulletin board. This time, Florida coach Urban Meyer seemed more than fine with the barbs. His team was a four-point favorite, and he wanted to avoid any chance of complacency.

"If I had my druthers, I'd rather coach a very mean, angry, nasty, upset team," he said. "I have to get to that point."

BCS ESP?

Everyone and their mother has weighed in on the BCS title game. Here are a few predictions.

Mike Bianchi, The Orlando Sentinel	Tom Dienhart, rivals.com	Teddy Greenstein, Chicago Tribune	John Henderson, The Denver Post	Daniel Shirley, The Macon Telegraph	Trae Thompson, Fort Worth Star-Telegram	Whizzer
Oklahoma 45, Florida 34	Florida 33, Oklahoma 28	Florida 37, Oklahoma 27	Florida 35, Oklahoma 31	Florida 48, Oklahoma 23	Oklahoma 52, Florida 45	Oklahoma 42, Florida 40

QBs in control

New York Times News Service

Florida's Tim Tebow and Oklahoma's Sam Bradford will be forever linked thanks to this frenetic college football season.

They sat together at the Heisman Trophy ceremony last month in New York, where Bradford joined Tebow as the only sophomores to win the most prestigious award in college sports.

More important, they will be across the field from each other in the BCS title game Thursday night as maestros of two of the nation's best offenses.

Tebow is the fiery leader whose indelible image from this season comes with his face stained with the blood-colored paint of Florida State's end zone. Bradford is more a low-key perfectionist, an only child who is more comfortable in the pocket than in front of the news media.

Off-season changes at Oklahoma and Florida led to high-scoring seasons. At Oklahoma, coach Bob Stoops switched to a no-huddle spread offense. Bradford flourished, picking apart defenses as the Sooners set a modern record with 702 points. They scored more than 60 points in each of their last five games.

Bradford threw 48 touchdown passes and just 6 interceptions. He threw 442 passes and was sacked just 11 times.

"Every time that I see him, his jersey is clean," Florida safety Ahmad Black said.

But with the arrival on campus of ultra-quick tailback Jeffrey Demps and the emergence of redshirt freshman Chris Rainey, Tebow's role evolved this season from lead playmaker to lead distributor. His numbers dipped, throwing 28 TD passes and running for 12.

Florida QB Tim Tebow
GETTY IMAGES

Charles in charge?

fame game

SHANNON J. OWENS
redeyesports@tribune.com

Gambling, drunken driving, sexual favors ... I'm starting to think Charles Barkley would actually make a great politician.

Barkley, 45, and another retired NBA player, Chicago native Antoine Walker, rang in 2009 with new portraits courtesy of the Arizona and Florida police departments. Each was charged with driving under the influence.

Walker's incident, however, was much less entertaining than Barkley's, judging by the police report that read like a "Saturday Night Live" skit.

To paraphrase, Barkley told Phoenix cops he was in a hurry to get to his job. And it didn't involve fellow broadcaster Kenny Smith, if you know what I mean.

Rewind the tape to July 2006, when Barkley made the public aware of his political aspirations. He told a reporter he was thinking about running for governor of Alabama.

"Alabama, that's my home," Barkley, a Leeds, Ala., native, told a newspaper. "I'm thinking about running for governor; they need my help."

Feel free to laugh.

There certainly were a lot of people laughing at the time, considering this was the man who claimed he was not a role model. But Barkley lied. His sullied track record is starting to model that of a politician more every day.

Hot on the ice

NHL players are making some good connections these days.

Carrie Underwood has become the latest blond entertainer to hook up with a hockey player. She previously dated Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo and is now dating Ottawa's Mike Fisher, according to various media outlets. Elisha Cuthbert and Hilary Duff also have NHL player boyfriends.

I could definitely see the appeal of a hockey player for a Hollywood-type. They like privacy, and what better place to be anonymous than a hockey game?

SHANNON J. OWENS IS A REDEYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR.

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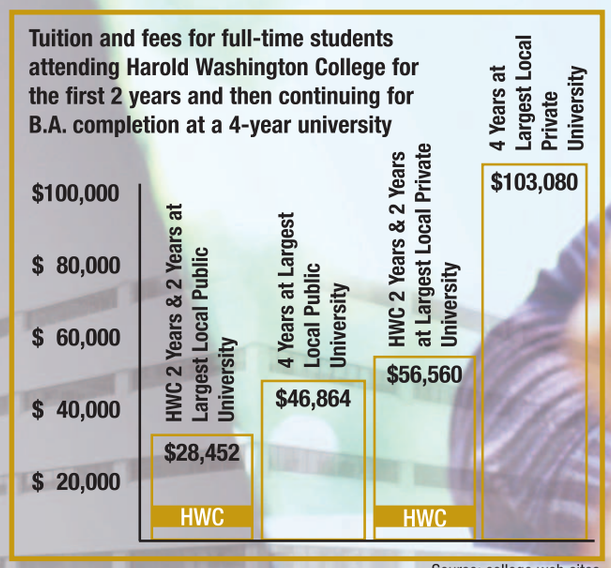

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On top

Tracy's beloved Gators are playing for a college title—and she gets to be in Five on Five. She leads a charmed life.

TOPIC	JIMMY GREENFIELD jgreenfield@tribune.com	TRACY SWARTZ tswartz@tribune.com	ADAM CALDARELLI acaldarelli@tribune.com	BRIAN MOORE brmoore@tribune.com	EVIL SUPER COMPUTER redeyesports@tribune.com
1 Convince us you're rooting for the right team in tonight's BCS title game.	Put it this way: If Tracy was rooting for earthlings, I'd root for martians.	Why would anyone root for a Sooner? Hope OK doesn't end this game early.	I root for whichever way Tracy swings.	I'm just rooting for it to be over. Everyone knows that's the right thing to do.	I don't need to convince you, I just tap into the scoreboard and—presto—I'm right!
2 Tim Tebow or Sam Bradford?	What are characters from "Eight is Enough"? I'll take Cubs collapses for $400.	Sam Bradford has a man perm! This panel wishes they could have a perm-man-ent.	Graham Harrell.	Either one of them in a Bears uniform would be welcome.	Neither can touch me in a game of Madden 09. HAHAHAHAHA!
3 What are you going to do once college football is over?	Sew up my wrists.	Prepare to officially draft Tebow to my fantasy team. Move over, John Krasinski.	Same thing I did when it was going on: better things.	I'll see a lot less irrelevant football, except for NFC playoff teams.	Work on fixing—I mean aiding—the NFL playoffs.
4 What's a crab dribble?	An STD playing basketball.	Jimmy's pet name?	The only time three steps have ever been called a travel in an NBA game.	It's what Jimmy does when he sees anyone who remotely looks like Heather Graham.	I'm not finding any entries of it in my hard drive. Seems it doesn't exist.
5 What are you going to miss about just-traded Cubs pitcher Jason Marquis?	Getting excited that he would be traded.	Losing?	Absolutely nothing.	How he said he wouldn't go to the bullpen, then played like a Triple A pitcher.	Most definitely his MacBook Air. Yes, I'll miss her dearly.

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Parker pregnant

Parker

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. Former Naperville Central standout Candace Parker is expecting her first child this spring, and the WNBA star will keep working out leading to the 2009 season.

The announcement was made Wednesday by the University of Tennessee, where Parker starred before going on to the L.A. Sparks. Her husband is Shelden Williams of the Sacramento Kings.

In 2008, Parker was the No. 1 pick in the WNBA draft and captured rookie of the year and MVP honors. She also won an Olympic gold medal and was the AP's female athlete of the year.

Parker's coach at Tennessee, Pat Summitt, and Sparks General Manager Penny Toler congratulated Parker. Summitt told Parker that if she has a girl, she hopes she'll be a future Lady Vol.

HOMETOWN HITS

The Sky signed guard Erin Thorn to a two-year contract. Thorn, a six-year WNBA veteran with the New York Liberty, shot 34 percent from the field last season.

No. 11 Syracuse 85, DePaul 68

Andy Rautins scored 17 points and Paul Harris added 14 to lead six Syracuse players in double figures in the No. 11 Orange's 85-68 win over DePaul on Wednesday night. It was the third consecutive loss for DePaul (8-8, 0-3). Dar Tucker led the Blue Demons with 18 points, Will Walker had 13, Mac Koshwal 12 and Devin Hill 10.

THURSDAY'S GAMES

» Loyola at Cleveland State, 6:30 p.m.
» UIC at Youngstown State, 6:35 p.m.
» Western Illinois at South Dakota State, 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY'S RESULTS

» San Antonio 5, Wolves 3
» Wisconsin 74, Northwestern 45
» Southern Illinois 74, Wichita St. 62

NHL

Bite leads to suspension

Ottawa Senators forward Jarkko Ruutu has been suspended by the NHL for two games without pay for biting Buffalo Sabres enforcer Andrew Peters. Ruutu bit down on Peters' glove during an altercation Tuesday, forcing his glove off and breaking the skin on his right thumb.

NFL

Bush has knee surgery

The New Orleans Saints have confirmed that running back Reggie Bush had surgery on his left knee and will require months of rehabilitation. Bush is expected to be ready for minicamp in June. He was placed on injured reserve after the latest injury in the Dec. 11 game against the Bears.

watch dog

WHIZZER
redeyesports@tribune.com

This BCS game couldn't have come any sooner (sorry, no Oklahoma pun intended).

There's so much chatter around this game that it's probably jamming the Homeland Security agents eavesdropping on my neighbor's calls. (He is shady, I admit. He keeps his cat on a leash!)

In any event, I'll be glad when it's over so I can get back to the business of losing money on NFL playoff games.

Here now, my TV picks.

BCS TITLE GAME

Florida vs. Oklahoma

7:15 p.m. Fox
Like "Star Wars" prequels, the Cubs and "Chinese Democracy," this game won't live up to the hype.

NHL

Blackhawks at Colorado

8 p.m. CSN
The skiing in Colorado is great this time of year. The hockey—not so much.

GOLF

Mercedes-Benz Championship

5 p.m. The Golf Channel
The PGA season tees off—still without Tiger Woods.

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The Melting Pot
FILE FOR METROMIX

The new deal

Overhaul your '09 budget with a little help from our under-$25 dining deals

By M. Kathleen Pratt

Holiday credit card bills are rolling in, the markets keep sliding, and you're still not sure you'll have a job next week. All signs point to a spending lockdown. Still, there are some things you just can't live without—like food and, uh, the occasional beer. Give your '09 budget an early boost with these dining deals, all $25 or less.

$4 John's Place
1200 W. Webster Ave. 773-525-6670

Lincoln Park's go-to neighborhood spot gets consistent raves for weekend brunch, but the real deal here comes mid-week, when burgers are just $4. Splurge on a cheeseburger for $4.75, and you've still got change left for the meter.
When: Wednesdays

$5 Bin Wine Cafe
1559 N. Milwaukee Ave. 773-486-2233

This perky little Wicker Park spot has the ideal cure for the winter weeknight blues: a juicy, half-pound giadiniera-topped burger with fries. Linger a while over a bottle of wine, and you're one dreary January night closer to spring.
When: Tuesdays

$10 Mrs. Murphy & Sons Irish Bistro
3905 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-248-3905

In good Irish form, this North Center spot throws in a beer when you take advantage of its weeknight pub grub deal. For $10, choose fish and chips or a burger and fries, plus any draft beer from a lineup that includes Irish faves such as Guinness, Smithwick's, Beamish and Harp.
When: Mondays-Thursdays

$18 The Melting Pot
609 N. Dearborn St. 312-573-0011

All the single ladies (all the single ladies!) will want to check this one out. Show up between 6:30 and 8 p.m. and get a three-course fondue meal for less than two Hamiltons. (Sorry, guys, this one's just for the gals.)
When: Thursdays

$20 Cuatro
2030 S. Wabash Ave. 312-842-8856

This Near South Side nuevo Latino spot usually heats up on weekends, but the weeknight scene gets a boost from a bargain three-course set menu, which changes daily. If you're craving a little extra protein, a prix-fixe with meatier dishes is available for $30. The catch: You've got to be an early bird—this deal is only available until 7 p.m.
When: Tuesdays-Thursdays

Cuatro
FILE FOR METROMIX

$20.09 Le Lan
749 N. Clark St. 312-280-9100

Chef Chad Starling has had a few months to settle in at the helm of this River North French-Asian bistro (former executive chef Bill Kim left in the fall to focus on Urban Belly and other projects), so now's a perfect time to stop in and sample his work. The annual January prix-fixe, which includes your choice of an entree and dessert from a limited menu of choices such as braised short rib and curried trout, is the perfect way to do it.
When: Daily (January only)

$22 Rustik
2515 N. California Ave. 773-235-0002

Cozy and lodge-like inside (some might say, umm, rustic), this Logan Square spot serves comfort food that's perfect for a winter night—and the three-course prix-fixe menu, which includes choices from the regular menu (but not specials), is the perfect excuse to venture out during the week.
When: Mondays, Tuesdays

$25 Erwin
2925 N. Halsted St. 773-528-7200

Unlike many prix-fixe menus, which limit you to a choice of a few select items from the regular menu, chef-owner Erwin Drechsler's seasonal menu is wide open on Wednesdays. Choose any appetizer, any entree and any dessert to complete this three-course prix-fixe.
When: Wednesdays

Rustik
FILE FOR METROMIX

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Sonotheque
FILE FOR METROMIX

best bets

BY JULIA BORCHERTS
metromix@tribune.com

THURSDAY FREEBIE

Viva Las Vegas

The Original Mother's,
26 W. Division St.
312-642-7251.

Eat like a king—or *the* King, rather—at the **Ninth Annual Elvis Fest.** The $5 suggested entry fee (to benefit the New Orleans Musicians' Clinic) includes peanut butter and banana sandwiches and birthday cake, plus performances by impersonators, Elvis karaoke and look-alike contests, and on-site Elvis portrait-painting. 7 p.m.

thu 8

Runaway bride

Brides Run Fitness Studio, 112 W. Grand Ave. 773-209-1719.

If post-holiday weight threatens the seams of your wedding gown—or your work clothes—head to the opening night of the **Brides Run Fitness Program**, a ladies-only workout for brides-to-be and any other women, regardless of nuptial status. The one-hour classes change weekly and could include belly dancing, hip-hop, yoga and Pilates. Thursday's class focuses on strength training. 6 p.m. $15 per class. Registration recommended.

The Rio deal

Sonotheque, 1444 W. Chicago Ave. 312-226-7600.

It might be freezing in Chicago, but it's hot at **Braziliance**. DJ Joe Bryl spins Brazilian beats at the monthly dance party; this month's theme doubles as a New Year's party with seven Rio-inspired cocktails. Sip Ipanema martinis (tequila, coconut rum, pineapple and sugar, $9) and the Carnaval 2009 caipirinha (passion fruit cachaca, fresh lime and sugar, $8). 9 p.m. $5 after 10 p.m. No cover before 10 p.m. or with R.S.V.P.: **nick.lambrou@gmail.com**

fri 9

Eye candy

Fine Arts Building, 410 S. Michigan Ave. Suite 433. 312-566-9800.

If you don't believe there can be too much of a good thing, head to the **Fine Arts Building Open Studios**, where galleries inside the historic building—designed as an artists' haven in 1885—open their doors to the public so you can peek at works by approximately 100 visual, performance and musical artists. Some studios even offer complimentary refreshments. 4:30 p.m. Free.

Mold your own

Hyde Park Art Center, 5020 S. Cornell Ave. 773-324-5520.

Ben Hollis, the co-creator and host of former TV show "Wild Chicago," performs an interactive comedy show at this month's installment of **Cocktails and Clay**. The event includes 45-minute sculpting lessons throughout the night (materials included) and the chance to explore gallery exhibits and groove to hip-hop and house beats at a post-lesson party. Cash bar. 8 p.m. $15 suggested donation.

sat 10

Hand it over

Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western Ave. 773-276-3600.

Need a new messenger bag, tattoo-inspired jewelry or a beer cozy? You'll find those items and more at the **Handmade Market**, featuring wares from 32 local artists, including clothing, accessories, journals, greeting cards and other gifts. Noon. Cash bar. No cover.

HOW TO REACH US | FOR ENTERTAINMENT INFORMATION 24/7, GO TO **METROMIX.COM**.

Metromix is published Monday through Saturday as part of RedEye, an edition of the Chicago Tribune.

For questions, comments and story ideas, contact Matt McGuire, editor, at **mmcguire@tribune.com**

To submit event information for Metromix or **metromix.com**, go to **metromix.com/listings**.

Positive energy

By Emily Hiser Lobdell

Their eats: In Spanish, the name of this Ravenswood BYOB means golden—the color of the sun. "To me, it means energy," says chef-owner Luis Perez.

It's an appropriate name—and interpretation—for the longtime Chicago chef's first solo venture. Four years after he opened the spot, energy still buzzes through the casual, candlelit dining room.

byob

Dorado
2301 W. Foster Ave.
773-561-3780

Perez's food has pizzazz too. You can't eat here without trying the Dorado Nachos ($9.95), a delightfully messy pile of corn chips topped with tender smoked duck and smothered in Chihuahua cheese, Bermuda onions, guacamole and jalapenos and drizzled with lime cream sauce. They're a perfect example of Dorado's unique blend of French and Mexican flavors, a style Perez developed after two decades of cooking everything from French to Mexican to Italian fare in other Chicago kitchens. The two cuisines come together harmoniously in popular entrees such as crabmeat-crusted Atlantic salmon over spicy chipotle mashed potatoes ($23.95) and a grilled center-cut pork chop over roasted garlic mashed potatoes, topped with plum mole ($19.95).

Your drinks: If you don't have a reservation and there's a wait at Dorado, head across the street for a pre-dinner cocktail at **Claddagh Ring** (2306 W. Foster Ave. 773-271-5551). When your table is ready, you can buy a bottle of wine or six-pack to go.

You won't score anything you can't find on the shelves of your local liquor store, but it's hard to beat the convenience of a grab-and-go bottle of Wolf Blass shiraz ($20) or La Terre chardonnay ($14). If you're going with beer, snag a six-pack of a smooth lager such as Harp ($12).

Dorado charges a corkage fee of $2 per bottle of wine or six-pack.

EMILY LOBDELL IS A METROMIX SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR. METROMIX@TRIBUNE.COM

Dorado
BARRY BRECHEISEN FOR METROMIX

What you're saying about Dorado

"I generally have a rule of not going to the same restaurant more than once or twice. ... Well, this restaurant is a definite exception. First of all, it's BYOB—who doesn't love that? Second, all I have to say is ... Dorado nachos."—JEN FROM BUDLONG WOODS

"Had the tilapia, it was great. My boyfriend had the salmon special—definitely worth a trip back. For dessert, we had the bread pudding; it was one of the best I have ever had. It is a little pricey, but the BYOB makes up for it."—AHM FROM LAKEVIEW

"My meal was delicious; my husband's was just OK, the fish being somewhat overcooked and bland, although the coconut sauce was very good. For dessert, we shared the chocolate chimichanga, which was excellent. ... Thought the meals were overpriced, but the BYOB helps! Service was very friendly and accommodating."
—MARILYN FROM BOWMANVILLE

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Thursday, Jan. 15
6-8pm

The Rock, Paper, Scissors Contest is coming to bars all over the Chicagoland area and Illinois. You're invited to throw your hand in the ring for a chance to win $500.

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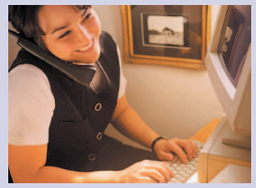

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Edvard Munch. *Anxiety* (detail), 1894. Munch Museum, Oslo, MM515. © 2008 The Munch Museum / The Munch-Ellingsen Group / Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.

$ tickets required

www.360degreeschicago.org

PERFORMANCE

Damine Kabuki Troupe $
January 10 at 1:00

Believing that a deity had saved their village from destruction, the people of Damine promised that the village's children would keep the ideals of kabuki alive. Bringing this 350-year pledge to a close, Damine students perform their last kabuki plays.

LECTURES

The Mystery of Munch's Working Methods: Recent Research on *The Scream* and *Madonna* $
February 12 at 6:00

Ingebjørg Ydstie, director of Oslo's Munch Museum, addresses insights into Munch's working methods and technical experiments revealed by the conservation of these two paintings after their shocking theft in 2004.

The Encyclopedic Museum: Enlightened or Entitled? $
March 19 at 6:00

Philippe de Montebello, Director Emeritus of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, considers whether the acquisition of art from Egypt, the Near East, and the Orient was the result of a quest for knowledge or a form of plunder.

READINGS

Insights into Ibsen
March 26 at 6:00

Recent productions of Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's work provide a mirror for modern life. Actors from Steppenwolf Theatre present key scenes and offer informed commentary.

Presented with Steppenwolf Theatre.

CONCERTS

L. Subramaniam: Across Seasons $
March 15 at 1:00 and 3:00

Composer and violin virtuoso Lakshminarayana Subramaniam weaves together traditional Indian and Western classical music.

Presented with the Kalapriya Foundation.

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Half-price cocktails, beers and hot sake; 1952 W. North Ave. 773-394-7373.

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$3 burgers and fries with first beer purchase, $4 SoCo Lime shots; 3937 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-528-3700.

CASEY MORAN'S
$1 burgers, $3 Absolut cocktails, $6 20-ounce Absolut lemonades; 3660 N. Clark St. 773-755-4444.

CAT'S MEOW
$2 cheese quesadillas, $2 PBR drafts, $3 Jameson shots; 2700 W. Chicago Ave. 773-489-6998.

THE COACH HOUSE
$5 sake bombs; 950 W. Wolfram St. 773-665-5660.

THE DARK HORSE TAP AND GRILLE
$1 High Life bottles, $1 PBR and Old Style cans, half-price bottles of wine; 3443 N. Sheffield Ave. 773-248-4400.

DICK'S LAST RESORT
7:30 p.m.: Elvis' 74th Birthday Celebration. Johnny and the 4 Man play live cover tunes in honor of "The King." Dress the part and swivel your hips during the Elvis impersonation contest for a chance to win $500, or gorge on jelly doughnuts for a chance to win $50. Also features themed food and drink specials. No cover; 315 N. Dearborn St. 312-836-7870.

J BAR
Complimentary appetizers (6-8 p.m.), $6 Snow Queen vodka cocktails, live art and music by emerging artists, DJ Jesse de la Pena spins 9 p.m.; 610 N. Rush St. 312-660-7200.

JUNIOR'S
35-50 cent wings, $3 domestic drafts; 724 W. Maxwell St. 312-421-2277.

KIT KAT LOUNGE AND SUPPER CLUB
5:30 p.m.: '80s Flashback Night. Watch a different flick from the decade each week on five jumbo screens (7 p.m.). Includes $15 tarot readings, retro menu items, $5 VOX cocktails and half-price bottles of wine with the purchase of two entrees. The Kit Kat Divas perform. No cover; 3700 N. Halsted St. 773-525-1111.

THE LIBERTINE
$5-$6 cocktails, $5 bombs and import beers, $4 domestic beers; 1615 N. Clybourn Ave. 312-654-1782.

MICKEY'S TAVERN
$1.75 Gordon's vodka cocktails, $3.50 Hacker Pschorr bottles; 2345 N. Leavitt St. 773-394-3037.

MOTHER HUBBARD'S
Free wings with a pitcher of Bass, half-price pizza with Bud bucket; 5 W. Hubbard St. 312-828-0007.

Metromix's top dance parties

Evil Olive

FUNKY BUDDHA LOUNGE
Kitchen Sink. DJs Trilogy, Dream and guests spin 9 p.m. $15. R.S.V.P. to **jammin4justice@gmail.com** for reduced cover; 728 W. Grand Ave. 312-666-1695.

EVIL OLIVE
Mix Tape. DJs spins, $3 PBR bottles; 1551 W. Division St. 773-235-9100.

LAKEVIEW BROADCASTING CO.
Dirty Girls. DJ All-theWay K spins old school pop and hip-hop 10 p.m., $3 PBR and Mickey's bottles, $4 bombs and PB&J maki; 3542 N. Halsted St. 773-857-2444.

LIAR'S CLUB
The Bomb Squad. DJs Tankboy, June Cleavage and Amber Waves spin downstairs, DJ Rodney spins upstairs, $2 PBR cans, $3 well drinks, $4 Jim Beam cocktails; 10 p.m. No cover; 1665 W. Fullerton Ave. 773-665-1110.

O'DONOVAN'S
$5 Imperial drafts, $5 Great Lakes and Dogfish bottles, $6 Old Fashioneds; 2100 W. Irving Park Rd. 773-478-2100.

THE ORIGINAL MOTHER'S
7 p.m.: Ninth Annual Elvis Fest. Celebrate what would have been the King's 74th birthday with non-stop performances by Elvis impersonators. Includes free peanut butter and banana sandwiches, birthday cake, Elvis karaoke and look-alike contests. WZZN-FM 94.7's Dick Biondi broadcasts live from the party, while portrait artists paint Elvis images live on site. $5 suggested donation; 26 W. Division St. 312-642-7251.

PIECE
$4 Bitburger Pilsner drafts, karaoke with Vince Michaels 9 p.m.; 1927 W. North Ave. 773-772-4422.

PLAN B
$1 sliders, $2 Coney Island hot dogs, $1 Bud bottles, $2 house shots, $3 house vodka cocktails; 1635 N. Milwaukee Ave. 773-252-2680.

RED IVY
Half-price thin crust pizza, $3 Hoegaarden drafts, $4 Absolut cocktails, $30-$45 table top taps; 3525 N. Clark St. 773-472-0900.

SCHOOLYARD TAVERN & GRILL
$2.50 Miller Lite bottles, $3.50 Sierra Nevada bottles, $5 Bacardi bombs, $6 double Red Bull vodkas, $5 sandwiches; 3258 N. Southport Ave. 773-528-8226.

SPIN
$5 p.i.n.k. cocktails, $7 p.i.n.k. martinis, VJ Riley York and DJ Ron G 10 p.m., drag cabaret 10:30 p.m. No cover; 800 W. Belmont Ave. 773-327-7711.

STAR GAZE
$2 domestic beers and select cocktails; 5419 N. Clark St. 773-561-7363.

TOWN HALL PUB
$5 Long Islands, $7 jalapeno bloody marys; 3340 N. Halsted Ave. 773-472-4405.

VICTORY LIQUORS
25 cent wings, $4 Miller Lite pitchers, $4 Three Olives martinis, $5 bombs; 2610 N. Halsted St. 773-348-5600.

WABASH TAP
$3.50 drafts; 1233 S. Wabash Ave. 312-360-9488.

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Primeridian's Darshon "Race" Gibbs (left) and Simeon "see-me-on" Viltz
KINGA PHOTO

Prime time

Chicago's Primeridian uses positive hip-hop to reach out to youths in troubled communities

By Kent Green
FOR REDEYE

Some hip-hop artists talk about dropping knowledge. Primeridian go out and do it.

The Chicago-based group, made up of Darshon "Race" Gibbs, Jaime "Tree" Roundtree and Simeon "see-me-on" Viltz, puts as much effort into its albums as it does into working with the community. The guys are involved with a number of education and youth outreach organizations, including hip-hop workshops at the Gary Comer Youth Center, 7200 S. Ingleside.

Rap and hip-hop have a particular connection with troubled communities, Gibbs and Viltz told RedEye, but the most popular styles rarely send positive messages. This spring, they're hoping to get some of their students' tracks played on local radio stations to help young people see that there is an outlet for conscious-minded work.

"Because [most radio] formats are so locked in place, there's no other way the youth are really gonna get a different perspective, so that's why we're hitting the grassroots as well, to try to get them to open up," Viltz said.

The group's songs embrace many styles and often discuss overcoming life challenges. They're excited to see the resurgence of Chicago hip-hop and of artists who push boundaries lyrically and musically. Viltz said the trend could hearken back to the city's heritage of soul, blues and jazz.

"I think that's a big part of why Chicago artists tend to have something of substance to say and have a soulful feeling to their music," he said.

"I feel like we're kind of blessed to be in that position, to be in this city, to be from this movement going on."

KENT GREEN IS A REDEYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR.

LISTEN TO PRIMERIDIAN'S SONG "TAKUTHERE" AT ***redeyechicago.com/chitunes***

chitunes

Primeridian
When: 8 p.m. Jan. 14
Where: Reggie's Rock Club, 2109 S. State
With: Nappy Roots, The Pathfinders, Radius, Decay and Astonish
Tickets: $15; call 312-949-0220

Metromix's top shows

AIR THIS SIDE OF CAUTION
Dreamy Chicago indie rockers are worth paying for, but no cover is a bonus. With Biltmores.
9 p.m. Free. Double Door, 1572 N. Milwaukee Ave. 773-489-3160.

BUDDY GUY
Local blues dynamo kicks off annual residency in his own club. With Ronnie Baker Brooks.
9 p.m. $40. Buddy Guy's Legends, 754 S. Wabash Ave. 312-427-0333.

ALL CITY AFFAIRS
Local indie-rock outfit plays release show for new "Identity Theft." With The Pomegranates.
9 p.m. $7. Schubas, 3159 N. Southport Ave. 773-525-2508.

JOSH PHIFFER
Singer-songwriter sings with conviction, and sometimes that's all that matters. With Plunket, The Compromise.
6:30 p.m. $8-$10. Subterranean, 2011 W. North Ave. **housecallent.com**

All City Affairs

ASHLAND SAINTS, CARPET THIEVES
9 p.m. $6-$8. Abbey Pub, 3420 W. Grace St. 773-478-4408.

BACK IN BLACK, APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION
9 p.m. $13-$15. House of Blues, 329 N. Dearborn St. 312-923-2000.

THE BLUE RIBBON GLEE CLUB, GRUN-TU-MOLANI, LEAVES
9:30 p.m. $8. Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western Ave. 773-276-3600.

CACAW, BOBBY CONN AND MONICA BOU BOU, PLASTIC CRIMEWAVE SOUND
9 p.m. $7. Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia Ave. 773-227-4433.

EVAN JACOVER
9 p.m. Tips/donations. Uncommon Ground on Clark, 3800 N. Clark St. 773-929-3680.

MELLOWFIRE, INN CINEMA, THE MERGING, 6 DEGREES OF SEPERATION, SAM WEST
8:30 p.m. $8. Elbo Room, 2871 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-549-5549.

THE RIKTERS, GABRIEL LYON AND THE NOTARY, COME ON COME ON
8 p.m. $5-$8. Reggie's Rock Club, 2109 S. State St. 312-949-0120.

SISSY MENA, PERCOLATOR, TRIO IN STEREO, MEDIUM SIZED RABBIT
8 p.m. $5-$8. Bottom Lounge, 1375 W. Lake St. 312-666-6775.

SONNY FORTUNE QUARTET
8 and 10 p.m. Cover varies. Jazz Showcase, 806 S. Plymouth Ct. 312-360-0234.

SPITZER SPACE TELESCOPE, MITCH MEAD, CLUBLIGHT
9 p.m. $7. Ronny's, 2101 N. California Ave. **mpshows.com**

TULA, CASA KARMA, ALEX HOFFER AND FRIENDS
9 p.m. $8. Beat Kitchen, 2100 W. Belmont Ave. **housecallent.com**

THE VOCAL BREW
8 p.m. $8. SPACE, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston. 847-492-8860.

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Travel made easy

Let these useful sites help get you on a hassle-free trip

The Wall Street Journal

They won't stop snowstorms that disrupt travel for holiday fliers, but some new travel tools can make it easier for you to snag frequent-flier award seats, find cheap fares, book some perks for yourself and make your cruise a lot more enjoyable. There are even ways to try to avoid getting stranded by bad weather.

The new year is a good time to revamp how you go about planning trips and buying tickets. Here are some favorites worth considering to improve your trips and ticket-buying.

YAPTA.COM

This Web site can track fares on specific routes and dates for you. It added a new feature last fall that alerts users when airlines make new seats available at the lowest-priced frequent-flier award levels. Even though you may find a certain flight unavailable for the cheapest frequent-flier awards, the inventory can change, and if the flight sells slowly and empty seats are available, airlines often open up frequent-flier seat inventory. Unless you constantly check, you'd never know. But now Yapta can check for you.

Use the free Web site's regular "Plan a Trip" function, and the Web site finds prices and recommends flights based on your preferences. If you "tag" flights that interest you, Yapta will track pricing changes, sending e-mail alerts.

EXPERTFLYER.COM

A subscription Web site favored by hard-core road warriors who mine the intricacies of airline fare codes and upgrade rules, Expert Flyer has a more sophisticated "Award and Upgrade Availability" search function. You can search for coach, business-class or first-class awards at different price levels on different airlines, and search for upgrade opportunities as well.

American, for example, has at least four different first-class awards: first-class tickets at full and discounted mileage levels, plus upgrades using 500-mile electronic stickers issued to frequent fliers and upgrades using miles and co-payments. American's Web site won't tell you how many seats are available at different mileage levels or whether upgrades are available to you using miles or stickers. But ExpertFlyer can deliver that kind of information.

ExpertFlyer, which costs $9.99 a month for full access or $99.99 a year, can search the available inventory of 21 different carriers worldwide. The Web site also has an alert feature that will e-mail you when seats become available on a specific flight at a specific award or price level you want.

TRIPIT.COM

This Web site will take all your travel confirmations and compile one detailed itinerary, even adding directions to hotels or appointments, plus weather forecasts and other local information. Sign up with your e-mail address and send TripIt your airline, hotel, car rental confirmations and even appointments or events. TripIt puts all your confirmation numbers and details in one document.

OPENTABLE.COM

A handy way to find a restaurant in a city you're visiting (or even at home), this site also allows you to quickly book a reservation. Even if the air travel is a nightmare, at least you can eat well.

KAYAK.COM

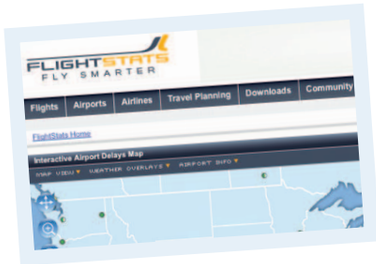
This useful fare-search site checks a lot of different vendors, from airlines themselves to online travel agencies like **orbitz.com** and **travelocity.com**, and it offers some handy tools to refine your flight searches.

If you don't want to consider turboprop aircraft or regional jets, for example, Kayak lets you exclude those flights from your searches. Kayak breaks down available itineraries by airline, time of day, number of stops and how long layovers might be. And Kayak has a one-click feature that opens a chart showing you airline fees—now a crucial element when comparing prices between airlines.

Kayak doesn't sell tickets itself; it sends you to the airline Web site or online travel agency where it found the price you want. It's a free service and a handy place to start your fare searches.

FLIGHT STATS.COM

Always sign up for flight alerts from your airline or **flightstats.com** so you get early notice of cancellations, gate changes or delays. Flight alerts also are helpful when picking people up at airports.



FARECOMPARE.COM

This site has a couple of useful tools to help make smarter ticket-buying decisions. One option shows historical graphs of the lowest prices offered on a route, looking back at what airlines offered over the past seven days all the way out to the past two years. If you can see that the price hasn't been below $200 over the past two years, you may be foolish to hope for a $150 ticket on a particular route.

Another useful FareCompare function: a search for discounted first-class seats. Just enter your departure city, and FareCompare can show you discounted first-class seats to hundreds of destinations. Some are coach prices that include instant upgrades, called "Y-Up" fares, and some are just advance-purchase discounted first-class tickets.

USACA.COM and AIRLINE CONSOLIDATOR.COM

If you're after the cheapest possible coach ticket, consider buying from one of these "consolidators." Consolidators take seats that airlines don't think they can sell and offer them at very steep discounts. Moving the seats out of regular inventory means airlines don't have to slash their posted prices and trigger fare wars with competitors. But the distressed inventory gets sold, much like a retailer dumping excess inventory at the outlet mall.

A warning about consolidator tickets, however: You have very few rights when you fly. You likely won't get perks like frequent-flier mileage credit or advance seat assignments, and you will be at the bottom of the list for re-accommodation if flights get canceled or connections are missed.

Cruise the Web for deals

If you're planning a cruise in 2009, three Web sites can be a big help.

WALL STREET JOURNAL

CRUISECRITIC.COM

This site offers reviews boat-by-boat and port-by-port, evaluating cruise lines and itineraries and offering recommendations for cruises suited for families or couples or adventurers or mature adults. It has a fairly large database of cruise reviews from travelers, and you can pick up a lot of tips, especially if you aren't an experienced cruiser.

SHORETRIPS.COM

Shore Trips offers links and reviews of shore trips offered by local firms, sometimes a better value than the shore excursions offered by cruise lines. Prices can be cheaper, and the trips may be longer than what the companies linked to the cruise-line offers.

CDC.GOV

Before you buy a cruise, it's worthwhile to check the sanitary record of the ship you are considering at **cdc.gov**, the Web site of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which posts inspection scores under its Vessel Sanitation Program. On the current "green sheet" of inspection scores, six ships out of 153 failed to achieve acceptable scores: Amadea, Celebrity Infinity, MV Clipper Pacific, Nautilus Explorer, Pride of Aloha and Stad Amsterdam. As with restaurant health-department scores, the transgressions can run from burned-out light bulbs to major health issues, and may have been immediately corrected. Issues from each inspection are listed.

New buzzword: Economy

Chicago Tribune

If the trend of last year's Adventures in Travel Expo was eco-conscious vacationing, this year's is a no-brainer: economy travel.

Dedicated travelers are not giving up their vacations in this slumping economy, but they are trying to make them more affordable, said John Golicz, chief executive officer of Unicomm, a trade-show company co-sponsoring this weekend's event at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, 5555 N. River Rd., Rosemont.

"The difference this year is value," Golicz said. "People are planning a lot more carefully."

About a third of travelers recently surveyed by Unicomm said they plan to stay closer to home in 2009 or will visit somewhere where the dollar goes further, Golicz said.

If you still are undecided about where to go, the answer could be awaiting at this weekend's expo, also sponsored by the Chicago Tribune. The two-day event, in its fifth year, will include more than 150 exhibitors. Tickets for the Adventures in Travel Expo cost $15 and are available at **adventureexpo.com**.

Expert advice

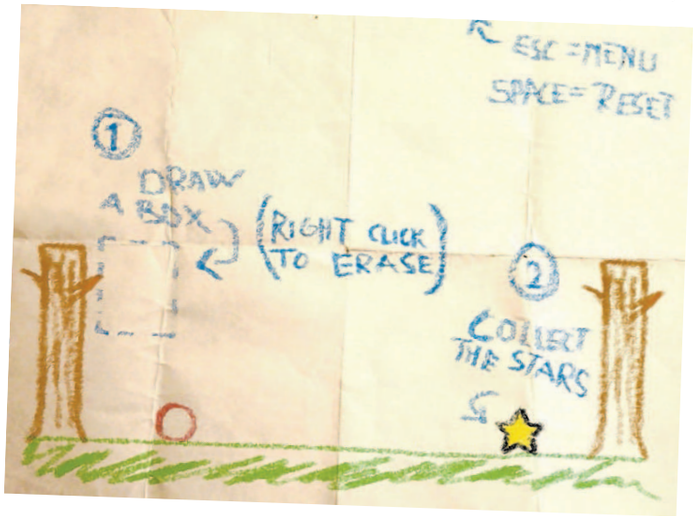
No adventure would be complete without meeting Chicago Tribune Travel editor Ross Werland, who will be in the Tribune booth at the show from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday.

Things that turn us on

VIDEO GAME
Crayon Physics Deluxe
crayonphysics.com

Winner of the 2008 Independent Games Festival, Crayon Physics Deluxe is deceptive with its simple crayon-drawn presentation. But there is depth in this 2-D puzzle game where the goal is to get a red ball from one side of the screen to a star on the other. Sounds easy, but numerous obstacles block your progress. To navigate the screen, you draw shapes with the mouse to manipulate the ball and reach your objective. PC for $19.95. Also available for iPhone ($4.99) at **bit.ly/18in4**.

REX CHEKAL, REDEYE



IPHONE
WordPop!
bit.ly/zKqt (link opens in iTunes)

You might have seen this game on other cell phones, but you've never seen it like the iPhone app version. You'll be treated to great color, graphics and sound. The object of WordPop! is to clear the board by creating words. And if that sounds easy, it's not. WordPop! is on sale for $1.99 until Jan. 20.

SCOTT KLEINBERG, REDEYE

WEB
The Pingu Show
youtube.com/user/pingu

A baby named Ella turned RedEye onto this delightful Swiss kids' show.

Don't let the word "kids" scare you off; Pingu the claymation penguin will suck you in with his playful pranks and honking pen-guage. You'll be clicking on another 1- to 5-minute episode before you know it. We're especially fond of "Stinky Pingu" and "Pingu Lavatory Story"—but we're awfully immature. We found them on YouTube, but you also can watch at the official British site: **pingu.net/uk**.

CURT WAGNER, REDEYE

Savage

MUSIC
Swing
In stores now

This rambunctious party jam from the rotund rapper Savage (off his album, "Savage Island") is utterly profane, ultimately irresistible and all about an appreciation for the zaftig form. Over some chunky synth and frisky beats, the New Zealand-based MC doesn't exactly put it that way, but trust us, he loves people of all shapes and sizes. Especially if you're nekkid and, say, washing his car.

SEAN DALY, ST. PETERSBURG TIMES

vaccine research

Radiant Research is conducting a clinical research study examining an **investigational flu vaccine** on healthy adults age 18 to 40 years of age.

This study offers those who qualify, compensation for time and travel expenses.

Call Mon-Fri for more information
1.800.494.2227
515 N. State Street, Suite 2700, Chicago, IL
www.radiantresearch.com

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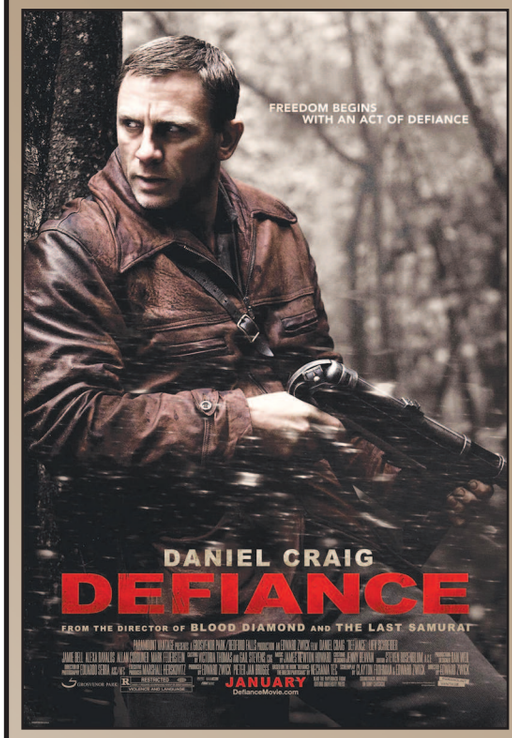
PARAMOUNT VANTAGE OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

INVITE YOU AND A GUEST TO A SPECIAL ADVANCE SCREENING OF



Visit

www.gofobo.com/rsvp

and enter RSVP code

REDE8016

for your chance to win an advance screening pass!

Also, submit your full name and mailing address to defiancechicago@hotmail.com

Five (5) lucky winners will receive a copy of Defiance, the book by Nechama Tec, courtesy of Oxford University Press.

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. VOID WHERE PROHIBITED OR RESTRICTED BY LAW. One entry per household. Duplicate entries will be disqualified. Entries must be received no later than Friday, January 9th by 4:00PM (CST). RedEye winners will be chosen via a random drawing from all entries. This film has been rated R by the MPAA.

IN THEATRES FRIDAY, JANUARY 16TH!

Do You Have High Blood Pressure?

Caring, Committed, Concerned

Cedar-Crosse

800 S. Wells Street
Suite M15
Chicago, Illinois
60607

Phone: 312-431-6765
Fax: 312-431-7959
Email: cedarcrosse@prodigy.net

The Cedar-Crosse Research Center is looking for people with high blood pressure to participate in a medically supervised research study. Participants will receive physical examinations, lab work, EKG's and study medication at no cost. You will also receive a travel reimbursement and up to $300 for your time.

Please call us at:

312-431-6765

MOTION PICTURE DIRECTORY

Handicapped Access ◆ Digital Sound
✔ Dolby Stereo ★ No Passes Hearing - Impaired

G - General audience ***PG*** *- Parental guidence suggested*
PG-13 *- Parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13*
R *- Restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian*
NC-17 *- No one 17 and under admitted*

600 N. MICHIGAN (AMC)
600 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago
(312) 255-9340
Show times change daily

AMC Select - The best specialty films
- **Benjamin Button** (PG–13) 3:20,7:00,10:30
- **Bedtime Stories** (PG) 2:45,5:15,7:40,10:10
- **Valkyrie** (PG–13) 2:00,5:00,8:00,11:00
- **Marley & Me** (PG) 1:15,4:15,7:30,10:20
- **Seven Pounds** (PG–13) 1:50,4:40,7:50,10:50
- **Yes Man** (PG–13) 2:30,5:30,8:15,10:40
- **Earth Stood** (PG–13) 1:30,4:00,6:45,9:30
- **Four Chris** (PG–13) 2:10,4:15
- **Twilight** (PG–13) 10:45 P.M.
- **Quantum-Sol.** (PG–13) 1:45,4:30,7:15,10:00

LANDMARK CENTURY CENTRE CINEMA (LANDMARK)
2828 North Clark St., Chicago
(773) 509-4949

- **Revo Road** (R) 2:00,3:10,4:50,6:30,7:45,9:45,10:30
- **The Reader** (R) 3:15,6:45,9:50
- **Milk** (R) 1:30,4:30,7:30,10:20
- **Slumdog Mill** (R) 1:45,3:00,4:40,6:15,7:40,9:20,10:30
- **Doubt** (PG–13) 1:55,4:45,7:35,10:10

CITY NORTH 14 (KERASOTES)
2600 N. Western Ave.
(800) 326-3264 #1642

- **The Spirit** (PG–13) 1:40,4:10,7:00,9:40
- **Benjamin Button** (PG–13) 2:00,6:10,10:00
- **Bedtime Stories** (PG) 12:20,1:50,2:50,4:20,5:30,7:10,7:50,9:45,10:15
- **Marley & Me** (PG) 12:40,1:45,3:40,4:40,6:40,7:40,9:30,10:30
- **Valkyrie** (PG–13) 12:50,3:50,6:50,9:50
- **Tale of Desp** (G) 1:30,4:00,6:30
- **Yes Man** (PG–13) 2:15,5:00,7:45,10:20
- **Seven Pounds** (PG–13) 1:20,2:20,4:30,5:10,7:30,8:10,10:40
- **Earth Stood** (PG–13) 2:10,4:50,7:20,10:10
- **Nothing Like** (PG–13) 6:05,8:40
- **Four Chris** (PG–13) 1:00,3:30
- **Twilight** (PG–13) 9:00
- **Bolt in 3D** (PG) 1:10,3:45
- **Quantum-Sol.** (PG–13) 6:20,8:50
- **Madagascar 2** (PG) 12:10

DAVIS THEATRE (VALUE)
4614 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago
(773) 784-0893

- **Benjamin Button** (PG–13) ★ 6:30,9:45
- **Valkyrie** (PG–13) ★ 5:15,7:45,10:15

(continued)

DAVIS THEATRE (VALUE) (continued)
- **Yes Man** (PG–13) 5:20,7:40,9:50
- **Slumdog Mill** (R) 5:10,7:30,10:00

FORD CITY 14 (AMC)
S. Cicero at 76th, Chicago
(773) 582-1839
Show times change daily

AMC Select - The best specialty films
- **Benjamin Button** (PG–13) 1:00,4:30,8:15
- **The Spirit** (PG–13) 1:45,4:30,7:00,9:30
- **Bedtime Stories** (PG) 1:00,2:10,3:30,4:30,6:15,7:15,8:45,10:00
- **Valkyrie** (PG–13) 1:40,4:15,7:05,9:45
- **Marley & Me** (PG) 1:30,4:10,6:50,9:20
- **Tale of Desp** (G) 1:05,3:20,5:30,7:40,9:50
- **Seven Pounds** (PG–13) 1:15,2:30,4:00,5:15,7:00,8:30,9:45
- **Yes Man** (PG–13) 1:10,2:30,5:00,6:30,7:20,9:40
- **Earth Stood** (PG–13) 2:15,4:45,7:10,9:40
- AMC Select **Nothing Like** (PG–13) 5:10,10:00
- AMC Select **Cadillac Rec** (R) 2:40,7:30
- **Bolt** (PG) 1:20,3:30
- **Twilight** (PG–13) 3:40,9:15

GENE SISKEL FILM CENTER
164 State Street
312-846-2800

- **Boy** (NR) 6:00 P.M.
- **Azur & Asmar** (NR) 6:00,8:00
- **Order of** (NR) 8:00 P.M.

LINCOLN VILLAGE THEATER
6341 N. McCormick at Devon Chicago
312-642-2403

Call theatre for show information

LOGAN THEATRE
2646 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago
(773) 252-0628

- **Twilight** (PG–13) 2:00,4:10,6:25,8:40
- **Quantum-Sol.** (PG–13) 2:10,4:10,6:10,8:20
- **Bolt** (PG) 2:10,4:15,6:25,8:30
- **Madagascar 2** (PG) 2:00,4:05,6:05,8:10

MUSIC BOX
3733 N. Southport, Chicago
(773) 871-6604

- **Amarcord** (R) 4:30,7:00,9:30
- **Christmas Tale** (NR) 5:30,8:30

PIPERS ALLEY (AMC)
1608 N. Wells, Chicago
(312) 642-7500
Show times change daily

AMC Select - The best specialty films
- **Ghajini** (NR) 2:30,6:15
- **Australia** (PG–13) 3:00 P.M.
- AMC Select **Happy-Go-Lucky** (R) 2:00 P.M.
- AMC Select **Let the Right** (R) 4:45,7:30
- AMC Select **Rachel Getting** (R) 2:15,5:00,7:40

RIVER EAST 21 (AMC)
322 E. Illinois Street
847-765-7262
Show times change daily

- **Not Easily** (PG–13) 12:01 A.M.
- AMC Select **Gran Torino** (R) 1:50,3:20,4:45,6:00,7:40,8:40,10:45,11:30
- **Bride Wars** (PG) 12:01 A.M.
- **The Unborn** (PG–13) 12:01 A.M.
- AMC Select **Revo Road** (R) 1:20,2:20,4:20,5:20,7:20,8:20,10:30,11:10
- AMC Select **The Reader** (R) 1:25,4:25,7:25,10:40
- **Benjamin Button** (PG–13) 3:05,7:00,10:40 ;
- **Benjamin Button** (PG–13) 4:20,8:00
- **The Spirit** (PG–13) 2:30,5:15,8:25,11:15
- **Bedtime Stories** (PG) 1:30,3:00,4:00
- **Valkyrie** (PG–13) 2:00,5:00,8:15,11:05
- **Marley & Me** (PG) 1:00,4:00,7:15,10:30
- AMC Select **Frost/Nixon** (R) 2:35,5:35,8:35,11:25
- AMC Select **Doubt** (PG–13) 1:50,4:40,7:30,10:20
- **Tale of Desp** (G) 3:10,5:40,8:15
- **Seven Pounds** (PG–13) 1:15,2:15,5:15,8:20,11:15
- **Yes Man** (PG–13) 3:10 P.M.
- AMC Select **Slumdog Mill** (R) 1:10,4:10,7:10,10:10
- AMC Select **The Wrestler** (R) 1:45,4:45,5:45,7:45,8:45,10:45,11:45
- **Earth Stood** (PG–13) 3:30 P.M.
- AMC Select **Milk** (R) 1:05,4:05,7:05,10:05
- AMC Select **Cadillac Rec** (R) 10:35 P.M.
- **Four Chris** (PG–13) 1:15 P.M.
- **Bolt** (PG) 1:00 P.M.

CROWN VILLAGE 18 (KERASOTES)
7000 Carperter Rd., Skokie
(800) 326-3264 #2309

- **Gran Torino** (R) 1:00,1:50,4:00,4:40,7:00,7:30,9:50,10:35
- **The Reader** (R) ★ 1:30,4:20,7:10,10:25
- **The Spirit** (PG–13) 11:50,2:30,5:20,7:50,10:20
- **Benjamin Button** (PG–13) 12:10,2:20,4:10,6:10,8:10,9:55
- **Bedtime Stories** (PG) 11:45,1:20,2:40,3:50,5:10,6:40,7:40,9:10
- **Doubt** (PG–13) 12:50,3:45,6:45,9:20
- **Marley & Me** (PG) 12:40,3:40,6:50,7:20,9:40,10:15
- **Valkyrie** (PG–13) 1:40,4:30,7:15,10:00
- **Tale of Desp** (G) 11:20,2:00,5:00,7:45
- **Yes Man** (PG–13) 12:15,2:50,5:30,8:20,10:50
- **Seven Pounds** (PG–13) 12:30,3:30,6:30,9:30
- **Earth Stood** (PG–13) 11:30,2:15,4:50,8:00,10:30
- **Nothing Like** (PG–13) 10:10
- **Frost/Nixon** (R) 12:20,3:20,6:20,9:15
- **Four Chris** (PG–13) 1:00,4:15
- **Twilight** (PG–13) 10:05
- **Bolt** (PG) 11:40
- **Slumdog Mill** (R) 12:00,3:00,6:15,9:00

WEBSTER PLACE (KERASOTES)
1471 W. Webster Ave., Chicago
(800) 326-3264 #1641

- **Gran Torino** (R) 1:00,2:10,3:45,5:00,6:30,7:45,9:15,10:30
- **Benjamin Button** (PG–13) 12:45,2:30,4:20,6:10,8:00,9:50
- **Bedtime Stories** (PG) 2:00,4:50,7:10,9:30
- **Valkyrie** (PG–13) 1:10,4:10,7:00,10:00
- **Yes Man** (PG–13) 1:30,4:00,6:40,9:40
- **Seven Pounds** (PG–13) 12:30,1:20,3:30,4:15,6:20,7:30,9:20,10:20
- **Frost/Nixon** (R) 1:40,4:30,7:20,10:10
- **Four Chris** (PG–13) 2:20,4:40,6:50,9:10

SHOWPLACE 14 - GALEWOOD CROSSINGS (KERASOTES)
E. Side of Central Ave., just S. of Grand Ave.
(800) 326-3264 #1646

- **The Spirit** (PG–13) 1:30,4:15,7:10,9:50
- **Benjamin Button** (PG–13) 2:20,6:05,9:40
- **Bedtime Stories** (PG) 12:45,2:00,3:30,4:45,6:10,7:20,8:40,9:45
- **Marley & Me** (PG) 1:00,3:40,6:40,9:20
- **Valkyrie** (PG–13) 1:20,4:10,7:15,10:00
- **Tale of Desp** (G) 2:10,4:40,7:00,9:30
- **Yes Man** (PG–13) 1:50,4:50,7:40,10:10
- **Seven Pounds** (PG–13) 12:50,1:40,4:00,4:30,6:50,7:30,9:55,10:30
- **Earth Stood** (PG–13) 2:30,5:00,7:50,10:20
- **Nothing Like** (PG–13) 1:45,4:20,6:45,9:15
- **Four Chris** (PG–13) 6:20,9:00
- **Bolt** (PG) 1:10,3:50,6:30,8:50
- **Madagascar 2** (PG) 12:40,3:20

CICERO SHOWPLACE 14 (KERASOTES)
4779 W. Cermak
(800) 326-3264 #1644

- **The Spirit** (PG–13) 1:30,4:15,7:10,10:00
- **Benjamin Button** (PG–13) 2:20,6:05,7:00,9:40,10:30
- **Bedtime Stories** (PG) 12:10,1:10,2:30,3:50,4:50,6:30,7:20,8:50,9:50
- **Marley & Me** (PG) 1:00,3:40,6:40,9:30
- **Valkyrie** (PG–13) 1:20,4:10,7:15,10:15
- **Tale of Desp** (G) 12:40,2:10,3:20,4:40,6:20,9:00
- **Yes Man** (PG–13) 2:00,4:45,7:40,10:20
- **Seven Pounds** (PG–13) 12:50,1:40,4:00,4:30,6:50,7:30,9:45,10:40
- **Earth Stood** (PG–13) 12:30,3:30,6:10,9:10
- **Nothing Like** (PG–13) 6:45,9:20
- **Four Chris** (PG–13) 5:00,7:50,10:10
- **Bolt** (PG) 12:20,2:40
- **Madagascar 2** (PG) 1:50,4:20

OAK PARK

LAKE CINEMAS (CLASSIC)
1022 Lake Street
630-444-FILM #560

- **Valkyrie** (PG–13) 2:00,4:35,7:10,9:45
- **Bedtime Stories** (PG) 12:00,2:15,4:30,6:45,9:00
- **Benjamin Button** (PG–13) 3:05,6:30,9:50
- **Seven Pounds** (PG–13) 2:10,4:50,7:30,10:10
- **Yes Man** (PG–13) 12:05,2:25,4:45,7:05,9:25
- **Slumdog Mill** (R) 1:50,4:25,7:00,9:40
- **Milk** (R) 1:25,4:10,7:15,10:00

EVANSTON

CENTURY 12/CINEARTS 6 (CENTURY)
1715 MAPLE AVE.
(847)492-0123

- **Revo Road** (R) ★ 11:30,2:15,5:00,7:45,10:30
- **Yes Man** (PG–13) ★ 12:55,3:45,6:20,8:55
- **Bedtime Stories** (PG) 11:40,2:05,4:40,7:10,9:40
- **Doubt** (PG–13) 11:25,2:05,4:50,7:30,10:05
- **Frost/Nixon** (R) 12:50,4:25,7:20,10:15
- **Gran Torino** (R) ★ 1:00,3:50,6:40,8:00,9:30,10:45
- **Marley & Me** (PG) 11:30,2:10,4:50,7:30,10:15
- **Milk** (R) 12:00,3:50,7:10,10:20
- **Seven Pounds** (PG–13) 1:40,4:30,7:35,10:25
- **Slumdog Mill** (R) 1:05,4:00,7:05,10:00
- **Benjamin Button** (PG–13) 11:25,1:10,3:00,4:45,6:35,8:30,10:10
- **Earth Stood** (PG–13) 11:35,2:20,4:45,7:20,9:50
- **The Reader** (R) 12:30,4:05,7:00,9:55
- **The Spirit** (PG–13) 11:55,2:30,4:55,7:40,10:20
- **Tale of Desp** (G) 12:50,3:15,5:40
- **The Wrestler** (R) ★ 11:40,2:20,5:00,7:40,10:25
- **Valkyrie** (PG–13) 1:35,4:25,7:15,10:05

Where to go for entertainment? Start here. ZAP 2 it What to Watch www.zap2it.com

whoville

BY JIM WALSH

MCT FILE

"Gossip Girl" cast. CW

Too good for 'Gossip'?

'Gossip Girl' gossip heats up

Hate to burst your bubble, but it looks like Nicole Richie won't be making an appearance on "Gossip Girl" any time soon.

Despite rumors, the celebutant is not dropping in on the CW's buzzworthy show about back-stabbing teens, her rep told "Access Hollywood" on Wednesday.

The New York Daily News had previously reported that the new mom was in talks to appear on the upcoming season finale and that she was hoping for a really "bitchy, juicy role."

Oh, well. Surely there'll be plenty more opportunities for "GG" guest spots, right? If the network bigwigs are looking for any ideas, RedEye has a few suggestions for gossip girls who'd be perfect for the show. Check out how they rank on our Conflict Index.

Nicole Richie
It would have been cool to see Richie on another TV show (she recently guested on "Chuck"), but she doesn't come off as that mean anymore now that she's a ma.

drama queen

pushover

conflict index

Whitney Port
Who better to inject into a show about ladder-climbing and back-stabbing than Port, who ditched her friend Lauren Conrad's reality TV show for her own?

SamRo and LiLo
If you're looking for drama, look no further than Samantha Ronson and pal Lindsay Lohan. The latest rumor? They're on the rocks. (Which is totally NOT true, according to Lohan's blog!)

Paris Hilton
Hilton basically IS "Gossip Girl." She practically invented the spoiled public lifestyle—although she is a little older and wiser now that she's served time.

Britney Spears
With her new album "Circus," Spears seems to be staying on the upswing, but you know she could whip out some extra drama for "GG." Plus, she's done the guest spot thing before with "HIMYM."

Rihanna
She may be just living her life, but rumors of a romance between her and fellow crooner Chris Brown dog the "Disturbia" singer. Maybe that kind of stuff could work on the CW.

Jessica Simpson
The last we heard about Simpson was that she had a new fragrance. BORE-ring. She'll have to do better than that to compete with the catty Kathys on "GG."

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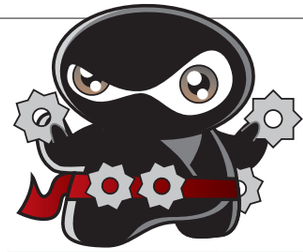

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5	3	6	8	7	1	9	2	4
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WEDNESDAY'S SOLUTIONS

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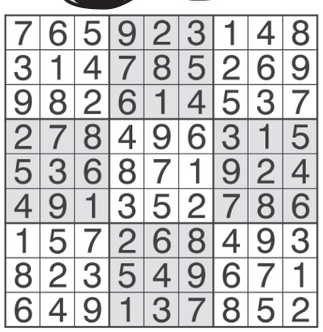
ACROSS

1 Map book
6 Prohibit
11 Kind of beam or road
14 French river
15 Expunge
16 Exclamation of satisfaction
17 Greek letter
18 Calls from the coop
19 Trident-shaped Greek letter
20 Fuss
21 Advanced deg.
23 Molds again
25 Shouts derisively
27 Cuddly to the max
28 Resound
31 AT&T part
32 Distinctive flair
33 Takes off
35 Harangues
39 "Viva Las _"
41 Snitch
42 Sleep noisily
43 Joplin or Glenn
44 Type of collar or jacket
46 Fork part
47 "Ben- _"
49 Unilateral
51 Game emporium
54 Landlord's dues
55 From Shanghai
57 Tiny
58 Make lace
61 Actor Steiger
62 _ Jeane Baker
64 Bible passage
66 Wind dir.
67 Pilot program
68 Madonna title role
69 Sun. talk
70 Pittsburgh product
71 Himalayan country

DOWN

1 Pond organism
2 Ugly character
3 Exec's transportation
4 Slot machine part
5 Sailors
6 ETD part
7 Afore
8 Max or Buddy
9 Feature
10 Lifesavers
11 Expire
12 Hops kilns
13 Bridge forerunner
22 Endure
24 Legendary ancient land
25 Late-ripening apple
26 Forum figure
28 Tach readings
29 GE part
30 Food-thickening agent
34 Engage in delaying tactics
36 Empty
37 Sea eagle
38 Germ
40 Schoolkids
45 Hawaiian goose
48 Vacation destination
50 Even-_
51 Land parcels
52 French wine region
53 Apple drink
56 Part of HOMES
58 Excursion
59 Movie dog
60 Greenish blue color
63 West of Hollywood
65 Night before



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red ho

Jennifer Hudson with Dakota Fanning in "The Secret Life of Bees." MCT

Props for Hudson

Jennifer Hudson could clean up at the 40th NAACP Image Awards on Feb. 12, according to E! Online. The Oscar-winner—understandably laying low after the murder of her mother, brother and nephew—leads with seven nods, among them for her role in "The Secret Life of Bees" and her single, "Spotlight."

Nipping at J-Hud's heels are two former co-stars, Beyonce and Alicia Keys, who snagged six and four nominations, respectively.

Do we hear a diva challenge?

Dude, it's a lady

There's not a single man in the "Single Ladies" video, Beyonce's rep says.

Internet rumors claim that one of the two dancers backing Beyonce in the video is actually her male choreographer, JaQuel Knight. Not true, says Knowles' publicist, Yvette Noel-Schure.

"That's ridiculous," Noel-Schure told the Tribune. "I know JaQuel and, although he's good looking, he could never look like those girls."

The dancer in question is Ebony Williams.

From the Pitt's mouth

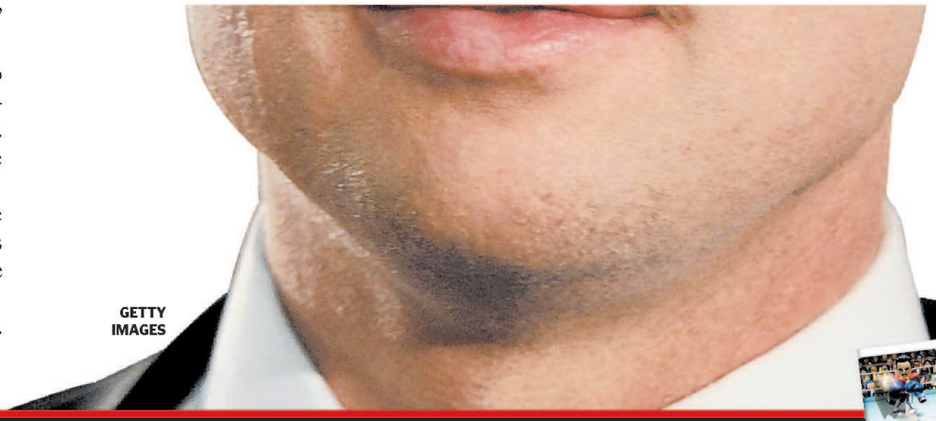
Brad Pitt wants to set the record straight.

The idea that he and Angelina Jolie hooked up on the set of "Mr. & Mrs. Smith" while he was still with Jennifer Aniston was "so created," the "Benjamin Button" star tells W magazine for its February edition.

"I think [Jen] got dragged into that [dig at Angie], and then there's a second round to all of that Angie versus Jen," Pitt told W.

"We filmed [the movie] for a year," he says. "We were still filming after Jen and I split up."

As for his relationship with Aniston, Pitt calls her a sweetheart, saying: "We still check in with each other. She was a big part of my life, and me hers. ... That's life, man. That's life."



GETTY IMAGES

Jay-Z in D.C.

After lending some support to President-elect Obama on the campaign trail, Jay-Z will help kick off the inauguration festivities with a show the night before the big day. The rapper is playing a concert in Washington, AP reports, for a crowd of less than 2,000 at the Warner Theatre.

Hamm-tastic

Mark your calendars: Jon Hamm's first appearance on "30 Rock" will air Feb. 5, NBC confirmed this week. The "Mad Men" actor has a three-episode arc on the NBC comedy; he'll play a potential love interest for Liz Lemon (Tina Fey). Hamm's character is a doctor who lives in Liz's building.

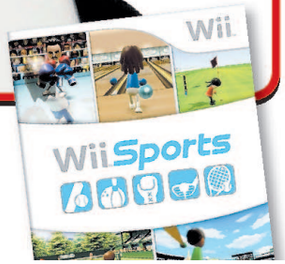
9021—uh oh

Is Tori Spelling heading back to that old ZIP code? "Entertainment Tonight" reported Wednesday that Spelling is in talks to reprise her role as Donna Martin in CW's update of "Beverly Hills, 90210." There was no official word from the network.

'Knight' soars

The people have spoken, and they think "The Dark Knight" reigns supreme. The Caped Crusader flick picked up trophies in every category, including on-screen matchup and action movie, it was nominated for Wednesday at the People's Choice Awards, the AP reports. Other People's winners included Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie and Ellen DeGeneres.

THE DIGIT

40.24 million

Number of units "Wii Sports" has sold to become to best-selling video game of all time, according to **vgchartz.com**. The game beat out "Super Mario Bros" in only 110 weeks of sales.